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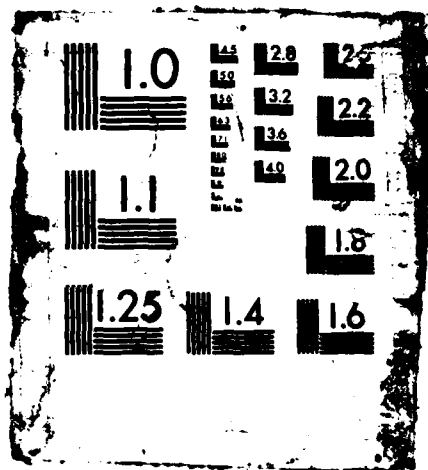
J L BARNES-FARRELL FEB 87 TR-87-3 N00014-86-K-0077

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Performance Appraisal: A Process Approach
A Final Report

by

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MAR 25 1987
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Prepared for
Office of Naval Research
Group Psychology Unit

Contract No. N00014-86-K-0077

Period Covered: 15 September 1986 - 14 September 1986

Technical Report No. 87-3

February 1987

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE		READ INSTRUCTIONS BEFORE COMPLETING FORM
1. REPORT NUMBER 87-03	2. GOVT ACCESSION NO. AD-A178754	3. RECIPIENT'S CATALOG NUMBER
4. TITLE (and Subtitle) Performance Appraisal: A Process Approach Final Report		5. TYPE OF REPORT & PERIOD COVERED Final Report
		6. PERFORMING ORG. REPORT NUMBER
7. AUTHOR(s) Janet L. Barnes-Farrell		8. CONTRACT OR GRANT NUMBER(s) N00014-86-K-007
9. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME AND ADDRESS Department of Psychology, U-20 University of Connecticut Storrs, CT 06268		10. PROGRAM ELEMENT, PROJECT, TASK AREA & WORK UNIT NUMBERS NR 170-960
11. CONTROLLING OFFICE NAME AND ADDRESS Group Psychology Unit Office of Naval Research Arlington, VA 22217-5000		12. REPORT DATE February 1987
		13. NUMBER OF PAGES 9
14. MONITORING AGENCY NAME & ADDRESS (if different from Controlling Office)		15. SECURITY CLASS. (of this report) Unclassified
		15a. DECLASSIFICATION/DOWNGRADING SCHEDULE
16. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of this Report) Approved for public release; distribution unlimited		
17. DISTRIBUTION STATEMENT (of the abstract entered in Block 20, if different from Report)		
18. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES		
19. KEY WORDS (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) Performance appraisal Rating accuracy		
20. ABSTRACT (Continue on reverse side if necessary and identify by block number) The report briefly describes research conducted during the one year period of this contract. Products of the contract are described; and reports and convention presentations made during the period of support are listed.		

Performance Appraisal: A Process Approach

A Final Report

Performance appraisal systems play an important role in the effective functioning of any large organization. However, in spite of their relevance and the increasing demand for effective performance appraisal systems, our ability to improve these systems seems to have reached a plateau. In order to advance beyond our present state with regard to performance appraisal, it is necessary to have a better understanding of the psychological processes involved as one person makes judgments about the performance of another.

The theoretical positions which have been developed in the field of social cognition provide a useful framework for examining these processes, since performance appraisal is essentially a cognitive task performed within the social and motivational constraints of a particular type of social situation. Therefore, the purpose of this one-year research contract was to adopt a process view to performance appraisal and then explore and test assumptions from this framework with empirical research. Variables that have been identified as important to appraisal were manipulated and/or measured, in order to explore those factors that influence the accuracy of performance appraisals. Specifically, the purpose of this contract was to continue and complete research already begun under contracts to Barnes-Farrell and Ilgen (#N00014-82-K-0449) and to Barnes-Farrell (#N00014-83-K-0757).

The bulk of the work carried out under this contract focused on four issues: (1) the development of procedures and materials for indexing the accuracy of performance assessments; (2) an examination of the



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processes underlying occupational age-typing; (3) the impact of gender-related variables in the evaluation context on the process and accuracy of performance appraisal; and (4) the integration and evaluation of recent empirical research which has examined performance appraisal from a process perspective. The work performed relevant to each of these issues is briefly summarized below.

Indexing Accuracy

A time-consuming, but extremely important, project for this contract was the completion of the development and testing of laboratory materials that would allow us to index the accuracy with which performance measurements are made. Three types of materials were developed: videotaped samples of waiter/waitress performance, with accompanying measurement instruments; stimulus materials for the controlled presentation of distributions of performance for the job "field interviewer"; and paper-and-pencil measures for the evaluation of performance in a variety of gender-typed occupations.

Videotapes. The most extensive and ambitious effort undertaken for this project was the development of a set of videotaped vignettes of performance for the occupation "waiter/waitress". Production of the videotapes and the accompanying BARS scales used to index the accuracy of performance assessments was completed under previous contracts, and is described in detail in Barnes-Farrell, L'Heureux-Barrett & Kealy (1986). During the current contract, these materials were used to produce interactive-video programs intended to fulfill two purposes. First, interactive-video technology provides an efficient means of controlling and presenting known stimulus materials to subjects, and for

recording their assessments of performance. Programs allowing us to interface our videotaped stimulus materials with the computer allow us to select and control the order and amount of performance information that subjects encounter when they are given the task of appraising worker performance. They will be of continuing value to us as we continue to explore the impact of various aspects of the appraisal context and the appraisal task on the accuracy of performance measurement. Second, this approach represents a very practical application of our research materials for the purpose of training appraisers to improve the quality of their performance assessments. The rationale and procedures which were used to develop our prototype interactive training program are described in Kealy, Barnes-Farrell & L'Heureux-Barrett (1987).

Distributional Measurement. A second approach to presenting appraisers with realistic, but known, samples of worker performance is the distributional measurement approach developed and endorsed by Kane (cf. Kane, 1980). Materials originally developed by Dr. Kane for the evaluation of "field interviewer" performance were revised and pretested under this contract. Although there appeared to be some problems initially with one of the performance dimensions being manipulated with these materials, these problems have been resolved, and we have now produced stimulus materials which will allow us to simulate actual distributions of worker performance over extended periods of time, rather than tapping into performance at a single point in time, as is typically done in appraisal research.

Gender-typed Occupations. The final group of stimulus materials produced for this contract is a collection of paper-and-pencil measures which describe behaviors associated with known levels of performance for a variety of male-dominated and female-dominated occupations. These materials are accompanied by behaviorally anchored rating scales designed to measure work performance on the underlying performance dimensions represented by these behavioral descriptions. Portions of the development work on these materials were carried out in collaboration with Drs. Jeanette Cleveland and Kevin Murphy of Colorado State University. The stimulus materials were subsequently used to conduct two studies which are described later in this report, and are currently being utilized in additional studies of the appraisal process.

Occupational Age-typing.

Two studies were conducted which addressed the processes underlying age-typing in work organizations. Both studies have implications for understanding the conditions under which age discrimination is likely to occur. As such, they address one possible source of contamination in the assessment of worker performance. First, a pair of laboratory experiments by Barnes-Farrell (1985) investigated the evidence for the existence of occupational age-typing. Barnes-Farrell argued that age-typing may be the logical outcome of the process of matching age-related social stereotypes of workers with our expectations about the skills required by different occupations. The results of these experiments support her contention that some occupations are age-typed, and that the "age-type" of an occupation is closely associated with the types of skills thought to be required by that occupation. A second study, by

Barnes-Farrell and L'Heureux-Barrett (1986), was designed to investigate the implicit personality theories that adults hold about the work-related characteristics associated with workers of different ages. Although a number of studies have investigated social stereotypes that our society holds about the elderly, we have very little empirical data about our perceptions of older workers. In particular, it is important to identify our expectations about the relationship between worker age and work-related skills. In this field survey, we were able to operationalize age stereotypes in terms of profiles of the work-related skills believed to be held by workers in different age groups. The profiles provide a means of identifying the kinds of occupations that are likely to be of particular concern to employers because of the increased potential for age discrimination in personnel decisions concerning workers in these occupations.

Gender-related Variables and the Appraisal Process.

Barnes-Farrell and L'Heureux-Barrett (1987) conducted a laboratory investigation which focused on the effects of job and task gender-typing on rating accuracy. It was found that the accuracy of ratings of task performance was significantly affected by the interaction between the gender-type of the task and the gender-type of the job in which the worker was employed, although worker gender did not affect either the level or the accuracy of performance evaluations. The reasons that performance information in task areas which are congruent with the gender-type of the job is evaluated more accurately are unclear. One plausible explanation is that the most elaborate category structures accessible when evaluating workers in female-typed occupations will be

those that are closely associated with the female sex role stereotype. Similarly, the accurate evaluation of performance in male-typed task areas may be easier to accomplish in the context of male-typed occupations because the job context increases the accessibility of male-typed categories. This interpretation is consistent with suggestions made by a number of researchers regarding the cognitive processes which lead to accurate appraisal of social information. A second study by Barnes-Farrell and L'Heureux-Barrett (1987) examined the manner in which task evaluations, once made, are integrated to form overall evaluations of employee work performance. It was expected that the manner in which performance information is weighted and combined may also be affected by gender-related variables. Of particular interest in the study was the way in which worker gender might affect the relative weighting of positive and negative performance information. A significant interaction of performance level and target sex was observed, suggesting that performance information is integrated differently for male workers and female workers. The results of these two experiments demonstrate that there are a number of ways that gender may play a role in the way we carry out the cognitive tasks which underly the accurate appraisal of employee work performance. These go beyond the direct effects of worker gender and the interactive effects of worker gender and occupation on the level of performance ratings. The gender-related effects of the context in which evaluations of behavioral information are made, and on the manner in which such evaluations are combined suggest that sex discrimination in the level of performance ratings and the allocation of rewards may be only the most visible outcomes of the way we view men and women at work.

Evaluation of Current Research on Performance Rating Accuracy.

A final product supported by this research contract is an integrative literature review which represents a collaboration between this contract and a similar program of research conducted by Dr. Daniel Ilgen of Michigan State University (Ilgen, Barnes-Farrell & McKellin, 1986). Our purpose was to examine the research which has been generated by the recent refocusing of the performance appraisal field on cognitive processes. The review focuses on the relative contributions of this "change of course" to our understanding of accurate performance assessment, and to the identification of interventions and systems designs which may facilitate accurate appraisal. Specifically, a conceptual framework for performance appraisal from the appraiser's perspective is presented, and the empirical research between 1980 and 1986 is evaluated as it relates to that framework.

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¹ Research which was supported by this contract is indicated by an asterisk (*).

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